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File: EBCFA-R - REQUIREMENT TO WEAR MASKS/FACE COVERINGS

Mask Procedures: School Opening Fall 2021

Given the recent increase in the spread of COVID-19 throughout the state and region, and based upon the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics, **the District will begin the 2021-22 school year by requiring all students and staff PK-12, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask when indoors.** Notable exceptions to the indoor mask procedure are as follows:

- Masks are not required during lunch
- Masks are not required when outside for any activity

This requirement will be reviewed monthly by the Superintendent of Schools in consultation with the district's medical advisory team beginning the last week of September. If the incidence rate for our communities and region are in the "low" range (defined as an incidence rate of fewer than 8.5 cases per 100K residents over a 14-day period) for the preceding two weeks or more, the Superintendent may, *after consultation with and upon the recommendation of the district's medical advisory team, institute the "Mask Procedures during periods of "low" Covid transmission in the community and region described below."*

Mask Procedures during periods of "low" Covid transmission in the community and region:**For Students:**

- All students in Preschool through Grade 6 are required to wear masks in indoor settings.
 - o Masks are not required during lunch
 - o Masks are not required when outside for any activity
 - o Mask guidelines for students in PK-6 may be amended to reflect guidelines for students in grades 7-12 after vaccines and made available to this group and there has been sufficient time afforded for students to become fully vaccinated.
- Students in **Grades 7-12** who have proof of full vaccination\$ on file with the school are not required to wear masks indoors. When your child receives a vaccine, their healthcare provider enters them into the [Massachusetts Immunization Information System](#), to which our school nurses have access. Families will be notified of their child's vaccination status in our system prior to the school year and as we receive updates from the state.
 - o During periods when the incidence rate in our communities and/or region increase above the "low" range, or upon the recommendation of town health departments or the district's medical advisory team, students in grades 7-12 will be required to wear face masks when indoors regardless of vaccination status. This requirement does not apply to lunch time or to any activity conducted outdoors.
- Students who do not have proof of full vaccination\$ on file with the school are required to wear masks indoors.
 - o Masks are not required during lunch
 - o Masks are not required when outside
- By federal public health order, all students are required to wear masks on school buses at all times.
- Anyone visiting a school health office is required to wear a mask.

For Staff:

- Staff who have proof of full vaccination on file with the district are not required to wear masks indoors.
 - o Staff will need to complete the Google form to submit photo proof of vaccination to Human Resources.
 - o During periods when community transmission increases to moderate or high levels* or transmission, or upon the recommendation of town health departments or the district's medical advisory team, staff will be required to wear face masks when indoors regardless of vaccination status. This requirement does not apply to lunch time or to any activity conducted outdoors.
- Staff who do not have proof of vaccination on file with the district will be required to wear a mask at all times when indoors. Masks are not required during lunch or when outdoors.
- By federal public health order, all staff are required to wear masks on school buses at all times

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File: EBCFA - MASKS/FACE COVERINGS

According to public health experts and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), face coverings/mask-wearing is an important component in the prevention and control of COVID-19 in concert with physical distancing and other measures and offers one of the best ways to mitigate their spread for the safety of our school community.

The Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee recognizes:

- The pandemic will continue to evolve, sometimes in unpredictable ways, and our schools must be able to respond rapidly to prioritize the health and safety of members of the school community.
- Vaccines and ensuring access to vaccines for members of our school community are the primary strategy to control the spread of COVID-19.
- Masks play an important role in mitigating the spread of the virus
- Requirements to use masks should be based on available local public health information and consider impacts on the learning environment in our schools
- Mask requirements should strike a balance between enhancing student learning experiences and maintaining a safe environment in our schools.
- The health and safety of our school community should consider the emotional well-being of our students and staff and the relationships among them.

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (ABRSD) may at times mandate the use of face coverings/masks that cover the nose and mouth (as defined in [EBCFA-R](#)) by all individuals (including visitors) in school buildings, on school grounds and on school transportation, even when physical distancing is observed. Such mandates will be developed and enacted by the District administration and may be amended periodically in response to public health conditions with regard to the spread of COVID-19.

Student masks or face coverings are to be provided by each student's family or caregiver. Staff members may use their own masks or face-shields, or they may use face coverings/masks provided by the District. The district will have a supply of disposable face coverings for individuals who arrive at a school building or board school transportation without one.

If and when face coverings/masks may be required for some or all members of the community, they may only be removed under specific circumstances such as while eating or drinking, during scheduled mask breaks, when staff members are alone in their classroom or office or as further described in file [EBCFA-R](#). Students or staff who otherwise remove their face coverings/masks may be subject to remedial and/or disciplinary action.

Procedures including details regarding the provision of masks, student and staff violations and mask exemptions are detailed in [EBCFA-R](#).

This policy will remain in effect according to state and local health department guidance.

LEGAL REF.: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, COVID-19 Order No. 31 - <https://www.mass.gov/doc/may-1-2020-masks-and-face-coverings/download>

REFS.: Center for Disease Control and Prevention - Considerations for Wearing Masks - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - Reopening Guidelines - <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/>

Commonwealth of Massachusetts - Mask Up MA! <https://www.mass.gov/news/mask-up-ma>

Approved: 8/3/2020

Revised: 8/19/21

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District